

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current
scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

U S D A ORGANIZER

1.9
Ag 810 L2
United Federal
Workers of America

Local #2 • UFWA

SEP 18 1937
Affiliated with
Committee for
Industrial Organization

Vol. 2, No. 5 i.e. C

September, 1937

FIRST LESSON IN PUNCTUATION

What is a question mark? It is a sign of doubt, an expression of the desire to be shown - an uplifted eyebrow in print. Its significance is largely negative as opposed to that positive symbol the exclamation mark which says, "Let's go!" These two are the conservatives and progressives of punctuation. For the time being, these concern us most but we may mention, in passing, the comma, which hesitates, the colon which leads up to something; the semi-colon which gives a breathing space without disrupting continued motion; the dash - whether paprika or piffle - which adds a bit of spice by way of explanation. The period says, "I have spoken; take it or leave it."

What has all this to do with union organization? Plenty! When the CIO moved into the government workers field, eyebrows went up like skyrocket. Otherwise intelligent people, filled with yellow journal propaganda, looked for strikes and sit-downs to occur among our harassed clerks and stenographers. Violence was to be the order of the day, if you could believe some of the things said.

As a matter of fact, nothing could be farther from the truth. The lodges that were suspended from the AFGE for opposing the company union policy of that organization - an organization led by the "very best people," you know, personnel officers and high officials - well, these lodges formed the nucleus of the United Federal Workers of America and have continued their policy of adjusting grievances and working conditions for the general betterment of employee conditions.

Agriculture Local #2 (formerly Lodge #31) is committed to the support of the progressive UFWA policy of intensive organization - majority organization - of all employees into a singly union in order that employee needs may be adequately represented. We shall never be satisfied with the half-hearted establishment of small groups called unions here and there. We must be a union for all.

We seek the participation, as well as membership, of every last one of you. Good citizenship demands that all citizens interest themselves in the affairs of state. Good employee policy demands that all act in organized fashion in the interest of the improvement of working conditions which in turn enhances the efficiency of the workers and the service itself.

In the process of affiliating with the progressive labor movement, we have lost a few question marks who apparently doubt their ability to carry out, in concert with their fellow workers, a progressive labor program. We have also gained a number of fine, upstanding exclamation marks, people who are willing to go ahead towards better working conditions and a more efficient Government service. Are you one of the latter category? Then don't comma, don't even semi-colon but make a dash for an application blank and sign up today with Agriculture Local #2, UFWA. Let's put a period to those doubts.

LOCAL NO. 2 AND HEAT, PATENTS, PROMOTIONS

Activity of Local #2 looking towards the adjustment of employee grievances is undergoing reorganization in the interest of more expeditious handling of these matters. Individual grievances may range from improper classification of work being performed to the existence of conditions which make work difficult (e.g. inadequate lighting or ventilation facilities). Employees, whether members of the union or not, are privileged to refer their grievances to the Adjustment Committee in order that their rights may be protected by the collective force of the entire union.

Certain immediate tasks of the Adjustment Committee are of general interest to all employees of the Department.

The National Office of the UFWA has taken up the matter of the dismissal from the BAE for union activity of Lou is Matosoff, formerly chairman of the Union Grievance Committee and, having been advised by counsel that new evidence so strengthens the union's position in the matter as to assure a favorable decision by an impartial tribunal, has decided to prosecute with vigor a campaign to have the case submitted to arbitration. Already a conference with Secretary Wallace is being sought.

The Adjustment Committee met with a representative of the Department Personnel Office and made representation to him that provision be made for the automatic dismissal of personnel when the heat becomes oppressive. At the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Social Security Board, UFWA locals have caused arrangements to be made for the dismissal of all employees when the official temperature reached 94. As a result of this arrangement employees were permitted to leave their jobs on several of the days of the last heat spell.

Several months ago, conferences were held with a Department Committee of Bureau Chiefs on the matter of patent protection of inventions made by

employees in the course of their official duties. On August 25, there was issued over the signature of the Secretary, a memorandum which set forth Department policy on this question, so highly important for technical personnel. The memorandum provides that in return for assurance of free use of the invention in the public interest the Department will undertake to secure a patent for the inventor-employee free of charge. Procedure of application designed to protect the employee coincides with that set forward by the union Adjustment Committee last May.

Representatives of UFWA, AFGE, and NFFE lodges of the Department, Resettlement Administration, Soil Conservation Service, Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation, and Bureau of Public Roads, have met jointly and decided that Personnel Circular No. 46 (promotions from within policy) is so highly at variance with the suggestions put forward by the unions' committee last spring as to have been rendered totally inadequate for the accomplishment of the objectives sought.

The meeting agreed, subject to confirmation by each local affected, that action be taken to secure such revision of Personnel Circular No. 46 as would give effective implementation to the principle that vacancies be filled from within the Department.

Local #2 stands ready to press for any action which will tend to improve conditions of employment and enhance the efficiency of the public service. Suggestions of activity which the Adjustment Committee may carry on should be directed to President John A Schrieker, Room 3630, South Building.

LOCAL 2 MEETS

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 16

ROOM 1039 8 P.M.

BUSINESS: CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION

APPLE PICKING BLUES

"... the Mightiest raised me to contend,
And to the fierce contention brought along
Innumerable force of Spirits armed,
That durst dislike his reign, and, me preferring,
His utmost power with adverse power opposed
In dubious battle on the plains of Heaven,
And shook his throne."

Paradise Lost

Thus spoke Satan when he had been unseated by God--without realizing perhaps that he was encroaching upon a sentiment which would someday be diverted from the cosmic struggle to the struggle of apple-pickers in Southern California. Specifically, John Steinbeck has appropriated "in dubious battle" for his own story of a strike among the agricultural workers in the Torgas Valley. And again he has unseated himself in an attempt to derive some generalization from the contemporary scene.

It is past time perhaps to remark that Mr. Steinbeck will bear watching, but in *Of Mice and Men* we were promised the representation of universal human tragedy--a promise which missed fulfillment by the narrowest of margins and concealed itself in the morbid attachment of two homeless men to each other, one an imbecile whose peculiar mentality made him not a common figure but a unique one. Now the field of generalization has been removed to one of more epic proportions--the struggles of workers for organization, and with it the gigantic implications of poor living; the social distitution and moral poverty, the frustration and the bitterness of rootless men pitted against boss greed and vigilante terrorism. Steinbeck sinks his teeth in here, and his portrayal is an honest one. But honesty alone must recommend it. The thing is an imitation not an interpretation of life; it is good journalism but futile literature, because it misses the rare challenge of possibilities inherent in human suffering. For Steinbeck, the achievement of giant truths is still an eventuality.

This time the search is with Mac and Jim, radical organizers; with "London," the leader of the strikers; with the skeptical doctor who has no faith in the cause which he supports; with Sam who sets fire to rich men's homes; with Dick, the good-looking Communist who seduces women to obtain food for the strikers. They are not real people; they are inadequate personifications of single virtues or vices, of abstract personality traits; they lack dimension. The flatness of Steinbeck's people is product perhaps of his own fatalism. Like Maeterlinck, he has created puppets, whose competence is never real or native or useful. On the other hand, he may very well be justified in creating puppets who are the victims, not of a metaphysical rigidity, but of an economic one.

The strike is lost, and Jim is killed, but Mack is triumphant. The workers have felt the strength of organization and will be better prepared next time to withstand the assault of the wealthy fruit-growers.

And the question abides; is there some analogy between the lost cause of Satan and the lost cause of the apple-picker? And the reader wonders: did John Steinbeck know the rest of his quotation?

"...What though the field be lost?

All is not lost--the unconquerable will,
And the study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield..."

IN DUBIOUS BATTLE, John Steinbeck. Harpers, 1936.

FROM UFWA TO CAPITOL HILL

There are literally hundreds of bills presented to Congress which have bearing upon the lot of government employees and which government employees have never heard about. That is, they never heard about them until the Legislative and Research Committee of the UFWA got under way!

Now, each bill and each memorandum emanating from administrative sources subjected to complete and thorough-going analysis. Every bill and every official statement is scrutinized and evaluated in terms of their value for the government worker. Every local union is kept informed and every union participates in research and discussion. The service which this activity renders to all employees is immeasurable.

At present, the Committee is concentrating on bills involving wages and hours and overtime. An amendment to the McCarran bill (\$1500 minimum) has been drafted; the Dunn and McCormack bills eliminating compulsory overtime are being consolidated into a comprehensive bill; a Court of Appeals Bill, to establish an efficient adjustment board in the various agencies has been prepared. All these and others embodying provisions for the benefit of the government worker will be introduced into the next session of Congress by sympathetic legislators. Until then, intensive research on all legislative matters will be carried on.

In short, for the first time in the history of the Government service, we are being kept up-to-date on the activities of Congress which concern us. Every bill, every executive order, is combed fine. Those that benefit the government employee are supported; those that threaten the security and well-being of the personnel are exposed. And behind the representations made on Capitol Hill is mobilized the tremendous weight of the Committee for Industrial Organization.

Thoroughly, efficiently, the force of the United Federal Workers of America is being thrown behind every move that implies improvement of the lot of the government employee.

WHAT ARE OTHER UNIONS DOING?

Social Security Board, Baltimore: continues to prosecute a case before an NLRB trial examiner to prove two dismissed employees were released for union activity.

Social Security Board, Washington: signs an agreement with administrative officers permitting the release of all employees when official temperatures reach 94; assists in effecting a new procedure for efficiency rating appeals.

Securities and Exchange Commission: confers with Commissioners to assure protection of employees incident to a 10% budgetary reduction.

Department of Labor: sets before the Secretary a Re-employment agreement, negotiates a promotions agreement; is given assurance that 18 "indefinite" probationary appointments in the Children's Bureau will be made permanent.

Works Progress Administration: with the aid of the Adjustment Committee of the UFWA District Organizing Committee endeavors to rectify a condition of anti-unionism.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS

MAY BE SIGNED

in: ROOM 3630

between: 8:45-9:00 A.M.;
4:30-4:45 P.M.

on: 1st and 2nd, 15th and
16th of month.

UFWA ORGANIZING TIDAL WAVE ROLLS ON

By Dan C. Kessler, Organizer, UFWA

The United Federal Workers' drive to organize the 800,000 gathers impetus daily. The half million leaflets issued by the National Office and distributed in every state in the Union are gradually taking effect among government workers.

Since August first, in the second month of the UFWA, ten Federal Worker Locals have received charters. Latest to join are numbers 31 and 32, a second Capitol Hill Local, and Chicamauga Dam, Tennessee, a union of Tennessee Valley Authority employees.

On the Secretary-Treasurer's desk are three new applications for locals to be approved within the next few days one from Social Security Board, Cleveland, another from field employees of the Department of Commerce, and a third from Navy Department employees. In the process of formation are locals in Philadelphia, Boston, and Minneapolis.

Organizationally the machinery of the UFWA is now complete. Regional Organizers are at work in New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Chicago, Knoxville, and Detroit.

Henry Rhine, National Organizer of the UFWA is, at the present time, making a quick transcontinental organizing campaign, cleaning up out of the way points not now accessible to the regular UFWA regional organizers. His itinerary includes Boston, Detroit, Minneapolis, Denver, and the West Coast. I am now temporarily stationed in Detroit.

Everywhere, the organizing staff found almost startlingly favorable response. The government service is one more successful drive in the CIO organizing campaign.

LOCAL #2 RECRUITS MEMBERSHIP

In the column on the left is the story of the organizing campaign of the National Office of the UFWA.

But the drive of the National Office can be no more successful than the organization activities of the local unions. We in the UFWA realize that our job is not merely to form local unions of a hundred or two employees in a Department. Our job is to build majority unions and to establish a one-union base for all government employees. To that end, we in the Department of Agriculture are beginning to build.

The Membership Drive Committee of Local #2 is hard at work. Programs are being mapped out for each division and each Bureau in the Department. Each member in these offices can help and should help the committee. Already a number of our members have constituted themselves as committees of ones, twos and threes to help sign up the employees in their sections. The rest of us must do the same.

From now until October 1st, we are setting ourselves the goal of at least double the membership we now have. Every one of us can add at least another member to the rolls -- and more.

Those who are not yet members, we urge now to join. Articles in this issue of the Organizer set forth the significance which progressive unionism holds for the government employee.

Sign this blank and mail to Della Cogan, Room 2754.

Name _____

Bureau _____

Room No. _____

ON THE LABOR FRONT

LABOR AND POLITICS

Many times in the course of its history, American labor has found activity in the economic sphere inadequate for the accomplishment of its objectives and has sought to establish a medium for political expression. Most recent and, thus far, markedly successful is Labor's Non-Partisan League.

Guiding itself by realistic tactical considerations, the League has exercised considerable influence in the election of Congressional candidates friendly to labor, has captured the Democratic primaries in Akron, Kent and Canton, Ohio, and is currently engaged, through its branch, the American Labor Party, in an intensive campaign for the re-election, in New York, of Mayor LaGuardia.

The necessity for some form of political action was the impressive lesson of the strike against "little steel." There, though the President, the Secretary of Labor, Senator Wagner, and officers of the NLRB all attested to the reasonableness and justice of the demands for which the strike was called, it was the anti-laborism and strike-breaking activity of municipal authorities which ultimately brought defeat.

With the successful operations of Labor's Non-Partisan League, there can be some assurance that the administrations of Akron, Kent and Canton, at least, will be sympathetic to labor's ideals.

"VIOLENCE AND IRRESPONSIBILITY"

General newspaper antipathy to labor and the sense of the press for the accentuation of the dramatic have conspired to create the great American myth which associates with the labor movement "violence and irresponsibility." Unfortunately for a public which ought to be enlightened, the great boon which unionism offers to labor and to the nation at

large is evidenced so undramatically that seldom is public attention directed to its constructive purposes.

It is undeniable, of course, that concentrate organization of employee elements is essential to the ordered operation of a concentrate economic society such as ours is. But omitting general considerations, unionism can justify its existence by its active achievements. In the garment trades, for example, whatever stabilization has been introduced has been the result of demands which the union has enforced uniformly throughout the industry; notorious sweat shop conditions have been wiped out; and hours have been reduced from sometimes as high as 70 per week to 40. In the men's garment trades, the union maintains a staff of production efficiency experts to consult with and counsel the employer. In coal mining, the union has engaged engineers of international repute to investigate more efficient productive techniques.

To such activities as these (and they are representative of the general functional significance of the trade union) the epithet "violence and irresponsibility" is clearly foreign.

WATCH MR. FORD GO BY

To Henry Ford's avowal of eternal independence from the scourge of unionism, labor has issued an ominous challenge. Before a cheering crowd of over 1,000 delegates to the auto workers union convention, President Homer Martin declared: "Before the snow falls this winter, Henry Ford, or somebody for him, will sign an agreement. We say to Sir Henry: 'If you want to go on selling Fords, you had better start putting union labels on them.'"

The union's Ford Organizing Committee has already signed up over 10,000 workers in Ford's River Rouge (Dearborn) plant.